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Forty-second plenary session
(Paris, 13-17 June 1994)

STATISTICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Note prepared by the secretariat

1. The Joint ECE/CEC Work Session of Environmental Protection Expenditures and Facilities was held in Geneva, from 23 to 25 March 1994. It was attended by participants from the following countries: Canada; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Lithuania; Netherlands; Poland; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Sweden; The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; United Kingdom.

2. The meeting was chaired by Mr. C. Costantino (Italy).

3. The Joint Work Session recommended the Single European Standard Statistical Classification of Environmental Protection Activities and Facilities for adoption by the Conference of European Statisticians at its 1994 plenary session. The text of the recommended classification is included in document CES/822. The relevant other conclusions adopted by the Work Session at its closing session are annexed to this note.

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ANNEX

Conclusions reached at the Joint ECE/CEC Work Session on Statistics of Environmental Protection Expenditures and Facilities

(Geneva, 23-25 March 1994)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Joint Work Session considered the following substantive items on its agenda:

- Proposals for the merging of the existing draft ECE classification with the apparent results of the work done by EUROSTAT on SERIEE (European System for the Collection of Economic Data on the Environment); and

- consideration of a Single European Standard International Classification of Environmental Protection Activities and Facilities

The discussion was based on Working Papers No. 1 and No.2, which had been jointly prepared by EUROSTAT and the ECE secretariat. It produced exchanges on selected fundamental questions of how to design the classification under study, also to specific proposals modifying the detailed suggestions for the classification as contained in Working Paper No. 2.

II. SOME FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

2. The proposals contained in the draft classification that had been submitted to the meeting for consideration aim at specifying environmental activities by environmental media and/or institutional sector to which the activities are related. Thus, they do not start from a list of environmental concerns, which might require the compilation of expenditure data across several media or sectors. It was noted that the current consideration of environmental management issues develops increasingly around integrated problems or themes. Correspondingly, new information needs are being generated, which are not fully reflected in an activity breakdown based on environmental media alone.

3. The Work Session felt that it would be premature to guide the development of the classification by this newly emerging trend for environmental studies and management. Currently, the problems associated with matching expenditures undertaken by different economic units and sectors with environmental themes cutting across institutional boundaries were considered forbidding, although attempts should be made to link expenditure data to environmental themes through e.g., cross-tabulations. However, if progress is made on this question, possibly through ongoing work on environmental indicators or on environmental accounting, the question ought to be reconsidered.

4. The risk of not being able to determine the part devoted to environmental protection in expenditures serving several purposes at the same time - or of breaking totals down by several relevant protection activities - was mentioned as another basic problem for the development of the classification. Here, remedies could perhaps be found through a convenient specification of totals or sub-totals. They could ensure the provision of reliable data for combined categories of relevant activities, when full detail cannot be given. However, a truly satisfactory solution to this problem is generally not yet in sight.

5. An important issue in collecting and compiling expenditure statistics on environmental protection activities relates to the risk of double counting. The Work Session agreed first of all that suitable procedures are required that avoid double counting to the maximum possible extent. Furthermore, it was also agreed that the Single Classification should result in the collection of identical data, if used by different institutions. Consequently, the Work Session suggested adopting the procedures to be developed in the context of SERIEE for use together with the present classification. It was recognized that this decision would not enable the specification of all such rules at the present time, as the SERIEE procedures are not yet determined in detail.

6. The relationships between Parts I and II of the classification were clarified in discussion. It was noted that the Part II responds to data requirements that have appeared in international data work (particularly in the framework of the International Environmental Data Service (IEDS) of the UN Economic Commission for Europe) independently of the needs for expenditure data. Thus, from this point of view, the two parts of the classification are unrelated, Part I being clearly more comprehensive in coverage than Part II. They are nevertheless maintained in the same classification for essentially two reasons. Firstly, a number of terms used overlap, so that the definitions are to be developed in close coordination anyhow. Secondly, depending on the project at hand, expenditure data can also be needed in terms of protection facilities, and not exclusively in terms of protective activities.

7. Further broad problems of delineating the scope of the classification relate to expenditure categories that, while in themselves important, would only belong to the wider surroundings of environmental protection proper, such as the preservation of the environmental resource base of a country, repair of damages caused by environmental nuisances, health-related expenditures like the cleaning of drinking-water, or clean technologies as separate protection facilities in Part II. These and similar categories are not covered by the present classification, for reasons of either conceptual stringency or the importance of data reliability. The same is true for environmental protection activities in the workplace. Protection activities at nuclear power stations and of military forces against radiation are also excluded, but here the reason is in the current difficulties concerned with confining data coverage to such items that would provide reliable data that are conceptually harmonized with other protection activities.

III. SPECIFIC ISSUES OF THE CLASSIFICATION

(a) Introduction of the classification

8. The treatment of recycling, the conventions needed to avoid double counting in its various forms, and the scope of the future work recommended in the text of the introduction constituted the main items for consideration. The results of the meeting's discussion of these issues are incorporated in the recommended Single Classification as included in document CES/822.

(b) Categories of the classification

9. The following specific issues were discussed in detail:

- Relationship between the protection of ambient air, climate and the ozone layer
- The optimal separation - or combination - of surface water, groundwater and soil protection in the classification
- The coverage of recycling
- The product vs. activity orientation of categories shown under waste management
- The inclusion or exclusion of the protection of forest as a separate 2-digit category
- The need to maintain a separate 1-digit category for the protection against natural hazards
- The optimal allocation of categories of research and development
- The coverage of protection activities against radiation and the level of the classification at which to include such activities
- The optimal treatment of education, training and information activities for environmental protection
- The need to specify a category that would receive all those expenditures that cannot be subdivided according to the specific categories of the classification ('indivisible expenditures')
- The need to maintain a recommendation regarding the type of data that appear to be sufficient for international data collection with the help of the present classification

The results of the meeting's discussion of these issues are incorporated in the recommended Single Classification as included in document CES/822.

(c) Definitions and concepts

10. Discussion focused on the following issues and items:

- Development of the definitions that had to be newly introduced in the light of the modifications brought to the categories of the classification
- Identification of SNA references to definitions adapted or reproduced from SNA
- Discussion and amendment of the following definitions: Characteristic environmental protection activity; collection and transport of waste; decontamination of soils; environmental protection; facilities for

environmental protection; final consumption; landfill (site); noise and vibration abatement; other treatment/disposal method; protection against radiation; recycling of waste; restoration and cleaning of water bodies; treatment of cooling water; treatment of other than hazardous waste.

The results of the meeting's discussion of these issues are incorporated in the recommended Single Classification as included in document CES/822.

IV. FURTHER WORK

11. The Joint Work Session recommended to the Conference of European Statisticians to approve the text of the classification as shown in document CES/822 as the "Single European Standard Statistical Classification of Environmental Protection Activities and Facilities".

12. The Single European Classification will be included in the SERIEE Manual. Publication of the Manual is envisaged in September 1994. The use of the classification during the implementation of SERIEE will provide insight into its applicability. Any appearing borderline cases or data insufficiencies will give rise to further recommendations. Furthermore, the application of the classification will be an input into various aspects of the ongoing work undertaken by EUROSTAT in the field of economic statistics of the environment as a whole.

13. The discussion in the course of the meeting generated two further types of recommendations. First, the Joint Work Session suggested that work on environmental indicators at the international level should both provide further clarification of various issues involved in the development of the present classification and use the Single Classification as input. Secondly, the Joint Work Session proposed to address the following items in methodological discussion at a suitable future date:

(1) Linkages between SERIEE and SEEA (System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting)

(2) Possibilities to compile data from existing economic databases in accordance with the Single European Classification

14. As a result, the Work Session did not propose any modification of activities pursued or meetings to be convened by the Conference of European Statisticians on environmental protection activities and facilities.